

NSC BRIEFING

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28 August 1956

ALGERIA

- I. In Algeria, during the past three weeks, terrorists, counter-terrorists and French security forces have all reportedly stepped up their activities.
- II. The rebels have been concentrating their efforts on the city of Algiers itself (pop: half-million)--now described as an "armed camp"--and the city's environs to a radius of some 75 miles. Rebel offensive operations generally take the form of pistol and machine-gun attacks on individuals, grenade assaults, arson, ambushes, and sabotage. Direct clashes with French security forces are usually avoided.
 - A. The French consider this increase in rebel strength and activity in the Algiers department to be the result of success in French military actions in the Constantine and Kabylie /Ka'Bill'ee/ sectors, and continue to express confidence in the ultimate success of the French military campaign.
 - B. However, the French military effort is in fact not progressing according to schedule and the government's goal of success by October may already be beyond reach.
 1. In the Kabylie region and Constantine-Bone sector, where the French have claimed the greatest gains for their pacification campaign, sizable rebel bands (100 men and over) are still operating effectively.

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2. Allegiance ceremonies and demonstrations attributed by French authorities to the initiative of Moslem groups and villages in the "pacified" area are reported [REDACTED]

25X1C

25X1C [REDACTED] to be greatly exaggerated and often staged by the French, and the gulf between the European and Moslem communities in Algeria still appears to be widening.

3. Although forced by French countermeasures to operate more cautiously and in smaller groups, the rebels in recent weeks have achieved some of their greatest successes to date by skillful use of ambushes, and have also carried guerrilla warfare into several areas not previously affected.
4. Resistance leaders now claim that the rebel movement at last possesses sufficient small arms and now lacks only certain types of ammunition and heavy weapons.

III. With both sides in Algeria apparently marking time on the political front pending developments in the Suez crisis, the outlook for an early cease-fire or for serious negotiations between the French and nationalists is now considered dim.

- A. Suez has hardened attitudes on both sides and dispelled the more favorable atmosphere for negotiations that had been developing.
- B. In July, the Algerians had apparently modified their previous adamant stand for outright freedom by demanding only French recognition of Algeria's "right" to independence.
- C. Now, however, the nationalists have renewed their insistence that any settlement is contingent on prior French recognition of Algerian independence.

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IV. For the French, the events at Suez and the West's soft response to date are seen as heartening the Algerian rebels to continue their struggle, and thus as undermining the "position of strength" France has been seeking to establish through military measures as a foundation for Algerian negotiations.

A. However, if lingering French hopes for cutting down Nasr are disappointed, the Mollet government may be assisted in modifying its "tough" Algerian policy by recent developments involving two French political leaders identified as proponents of toughness:

1. Robert Lacoste, the French minister residing in Algeria-- who stands for "pacification first" and who could make serious trouble for Mollet if thwarted openly--is seriously ill. Mollet could replace him without having to repudiate Lacoste's policy openly.
2. Marshal Alphonse Juin, himself Algerian-born and heretofore a symbol of ultra-conservative French imperial sentiment, publicly called on 27 August for the granting of a large measure of internal autonomy to Algeria.

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I In Algeria, during the past three weeks, terrorists, counter-terrorists and French security forces have all reportedly stepped up their activities.

II The rebels have been concentrating their efforts on the city of Algiers itself (pop: half-million)--now described as an "armed camp"--and the city's environs to a radius of some 75 miles. Rebel offensive operations generally take the form of pistol and machine-gun attacks on individuals, grenade assaults, arson, ambushes, and sabotage. Direct clashes with French security forces are usually avoided.

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The French claim that this increase in rebel strength and activity in the Algiers department is the result of the success of French military actions in the Constantine and Kabylie /Ka 'Bill' ee/ sectors, and continue to express confidence in the ultimate success of the French military campaign.

B However, the French military effort is in fact not progressing according to schedule and the government's goal of success by October is now virtually beyond reach.

I In the Kabylie region and Constantine-Bone sector, where the French have claimed the greatest gains for their pacification campaign, sizable rebel bands (100 men and over) are still operating effectively.

-2-

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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2. The past months have been marked by reports of a number of pro-French allegiance ceremonies and demonstrations by Algerian natives. These are attributed by French authorities to the initiative of Moslem groups and villages in the "pacified" area. [REDACTED] these 25X1C reports are greatly exaggerated and often that the ceremonies are staged by the French. The fact is that the gulf between the European and Moslem communities in Algeria still appears to be widening.

-3-

CONFIDENTIAL

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3. Although the rebels have been forced by French counter-measures to operate more cautiously and in smaller groups, in recent weeks they have achieved some of their greatest successes to date by skillful use of ambushes (map). They have also carried guerrilla warfare into several areas not previously affected.

4. Resistance leaders now claim that the rebel movement at last possesses sufficient small arms and now lacks only certain types of ammunition and heavy weapons.

III On the political front both sides in Algeria are apparently marking time pending developments in the Suez crisis, and the immediate outlook for a cease-fire or for serious negotiations dim.

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- A. Suez has had the initial effect of hardening attitudes on both sides and dispelling the more favorable atmosphere for negotiations that had been developing.
- B. In July, the Algerians had apparently modified their previous adamant stand for outright freedom by demanding only French recognition of Algeria's "right" to independence.
- C. Now, however, the nationalists have renewed their insistence that any settlement is contingent on prior French recognition of Algerian independence.

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III. The French, in turn, view the events at Suez and the West's response to date as heartening the Algerian rebels to continue their struggle, and thus as undermining the "position of strength" France has been seeking to establish through military measures as a foundation for Algerian negotiations.

IV. In the longer run, however, if lingering French hopes for cutting down Nasr are disappointed, the Mollet government probably will be persuaded to modify its "tough" Algerian policy and negotiate, even if "pacification" is no further advanced than at present.

A. Recent developments involving two French political leaders identified as proponents of toughness provide the Mollet government with an opportunity to pursue this course when it feels the time is ripe.

-6-

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1. Robert Lacoste, the French minister residing in Algeria-- who stands for "pacification first" and who could make serious trouble for Mollet if thwarted openly--is seriously ill. Mollet could replace him without having to repudiate Lacoste's policy openly.
2. Marshal Alphonse Juin, himself Algerian-born and heretofore a symbol of ultra-conservative French imperial sentiment, publicly called on 27 August for the granting of a large measure of internal autonomy to Algeria.

-7-

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